Wm. I. Bowditch
June 27
1852

Leicester, June 27, 1852.

My dear Sir,

I owe you an apology for so long delaying a reply to yours of the 4th inst. It reached me, just as I came (tired enough) from the N. E. Convention & the closing up of its affairs. I found a great accumulation of work here, of a different sort, — rather of a mixed sort, changing almost every hour. I had some heavy work of repairing to plan, provide for, & carry through. This, with arranging, providing for, & sometimes attending, a.s. Meetings, has positively left me no time save for necessary correspondence. Tomorrow I go to Boston, to complete ~~Expedite~~ the arrangements for the celebration of Independence.

I fear I shall not be able to give you much aid in answering Russell & Carpenter's letter; but, such suggestions as occur to me, you are quite welcome to. I see one thing, I think, plainly. He hopes to make you a correspondent of his, which circumstance in itself (if unaccompanied with any plain disclaimer of approval of his course in this country & in England) he will use as a justification of himself, and a proof that one of the truest of the Amⁿ Anti-slavery men regards him as a true anti-slavery fellow-laborer. — His sympathy in your liability to a prison, and his abhorrence of the State of things which has created that liability, does not seem to me more than skin-deep, when I think of the way he defends & justifies our most pro-slavery ministers, of his toadyism to Dr. Gilman, & other things in his "Letters on Slavery".

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Has he sent you a copy of those letters? ~~He did to me~~ Dr. Estlin sent me a copy. But I have them not by me now, having loaned them to Sallie Holley. If you have not seen them, let me know, and I will send you my copy; for I think it would be well you should see them, before writing to him. What does he mean by "retaining pleasing impressions of our country"! Were we any worse, in fact, immediately after passing the Fugitive Law, than we had been a long time before? Perhaps ~~the~~ we were; I will not now dispute that point. But to a great extent, that law was only a demonstration of the wickedness of this people's heart; and he himself admits, a few lines beyond, that the Law is "the natural result" of our American System — a system among which he moved a year & upwards, without giving one rebuke to the Slave Power of any weight, or one clear, effectual word of cheer to the Abolitionists. (To be sure, he attended a First of August Meeting at Worcester, & made a speech. And it is true, too, that, striving to be pleased with him, & to put the most favourable construction on what he said & did, I commended the speech somewhat. — But charity (if this sort of thing deserves that name) is not worth having, at the expense of truth. This I have partially learned. I am glad to commend, & to honour, and to respect, & reverence. It is good to do all these things, when & where they can be honestly done. But where blame and rebuke are deserved, there should they be given, I think, — always in a manly, good-tempered, & faithful way — else, nothing at all is perhaps better.

He strangely mis-states the facts of the case, when he speaks of the "Anti-Slavery ~~speakers~~ people in Eng^d being as ready to cry down a

Speaker, as the pro-slavery people are here". When he uttered some temporizing & slavery-excusing remarks on the meeting's sentiments of dissent were strongly expressed. But he was not cried down. He had an opportunity to say what he wanted. — "Be disposed to excommunicating" the proslavery American Ministers. He was not asked to do so. If their course, being opposite to that of the anti-slavery ministers, was worthy of blame, why sh^d. it not be blamed, as much as that of the others praised? — I think you must have been amused at his telling you how "calmly & guardedly" you brought the matter before the Unit^n. Ministers a year ago, after receiving their volley for the very bad taste and gross injustice of the whole thing. — His censure on Rev. Geo. Armstrong (of Bristol) for having married the sister-in-law of a man who was a slave-holder down to 1834. (18 years ago — Mr. A having been called attention to the slavery question long since that time) — and upon Mr Esthin, because 20 a 25 yrs. ago the scales had not fallen from his eyes — tho' now they have — respecting slaveholders, &c. &c. may be very weighty & pertinent, but to me seems shallow & out of place.

R. L. C. has now gone to Birkenhead, a commercial town springing up, on the Mersey, directly opposite Liverpool. The Unitarian influences in that neighbourhood are mainly pro slavery. Their instincts may have guided them to him. For I regard him, not exactly as a trimmer, but as a thorough Unit^n sectarist, postponing all things else to the spread & glory of his Sect, deficient in warm & generous feeling, and incapable of seeing the beauty of a great, true (tho' unpopular) cause, & of giving himself to its service. — When you write to him, I wish you would inquire into that matter of his omission to "pray for those in bonds" — at Dr Gilman's suggestion.

As to the matter of L. Douglas, I do not agree with you. If L. D. has deserved a rebuke, or criticism, who is he that he

should be exempted? And, when administered, let it not be called "quarreling among ourselves." I admit that a bad spirit & unseemly words ~~that~~ came into that controversy at Rochester, & injured our meeting. But I think you will agree that F.D. had far the largest share of both to answer for. — I certainly may have been mistaken in thinking F.D. embarrassed in mind & manner at Syracuse; but I believed I saw it then most unmistakeably. I think so still. And certainly a man, who is self-possessed, doesn't usually deem it necessary to say that "he is calm as a May morning." — I was somewhat surprised, I must say it now, to see you bowing such frequent and cordial assent to F.D.'s statements at Rochester. It had not the appearance of an impartial hearing. — I do not think the cause in the country, nor even in Western New York, rests with F. Douglass. If he lowers his Standard, to suit politicians, bigoted religionists, colonizationists, or any other set of men, he must take his chance, with the rest of us, for criticism & censure — and contempt, too. All this must be measured by his behaviour. — So sarcastic & [illegible] denunciatory a writer as he, ought not to be too particular however when hit himself.

^ With regard to the matter about Prof. Fairchild of Oberlin, I regret it exceedingly. I sent the letter immediately to Lucy Stone, suggesting it should be published in Liberator, Standard, &c. without delay. It seems she, too, had a letter from Prof. F., which, with some comments, is published in last Lib^r., as you have doubtless seen. — I made the statement to the Convention, at Lucy's request; — at the same time saying I knew nothing myself of the case. — I confess that, after hearing Asa Mahan's infamous & lying letter read, I was prepared to have my opinion lowered of his associates. — I have since been informed that the other professors & officers have had great difficulty in getting along with Mahan, and had signed jointly an agreement to quit the Institution if he did not. — We are all pretty well and send our best love to you all. Affectionately Yours Samuel May, Jr.

MS.B.L.1.43